

UNCLASSIFIED

"b1"

Anti-Satellite Weapons. At the end of FY 1969 the only active U.S. space weapon was the anti-satellite installation known as Program 437. Controlled by CONAD and operated by ADC, it consisted of two launch emplacements on Johnston Island in the Pacific. The alert missile was a THOR booster

"b1"

Oper-

ational since 1964, Program 437 was regarded by ADC as an initial, and relatively limited, step in the direction of a far more sophisticated satellite interceptor system. By the middle of 1969, five combat evaluation launches (CEL) of the Program 437 missile had occurred at Johnston Island. The

UNCLASSIFIED

B 2045

UNCLASSIFIED

453

first two came shortly after the declaration of operational capability, in November 1964 and April 1965.

"b1"

Hence

the third CEL did not take place until 30 March 1967. Two, however, were conducted in 1968, on 15 May and 21 November. The launching of 15 May was considered highly successful

"b1"

The mission of 21 November 1968

was similarly successful

"b1"

At the end of FY 1969 it was planned that the next Program 437 CEL would be conducted during October-December 1969.

70

Beginning 1 April 1967, ADC also bore responsibility for the launching of THOR-boosted payloads,

UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED

454

called Burner II, from Vandenberg AFB, California. This program was later named COLLEGE LAUNCHER. Between 29 June 1967 and 30 June 1968, four such launches were made. Determination of exact payloads of these vehicles and dates of launch was a responsibility of the Space and Missile Systems Office (SAMSO) of AFSC. The fifth COLLEGE LAUNCHER mission was originally scheduled for July 1968, but this was delayed because of difficulties in the preparation of the payload. This particular mission was unique in that it proposed to put 10 payloads into orbit at one time. Unfortunately, the experiment was unsuccessful. While the missile was successfully launched on 16 August 1968, the basic payload did not separate from the booster (in this case an ATLAS) and the 10 smaller payloads were not placed into orbit as planned.⁷¹

For a while after the abortive mission of 16 August 1968, AFSC supported a proposal that it take over complete control over COLLEGE LAUNCHER operations at Vandenberg. ADC objected, however, and the AFSC proposal was ultimately vetoed by USAF. Subsequently, the sixth COLLEGE-

UNCLASSIFIED

[REDACTED]

LAUNCHER mission was accomplished on 23 October 1968. A seventh was scheduled for 24 June 1969, but did not take place on that date because of an intervalometer malfunction within the booster. This launching had not been accomplished by the end of FY 1969.⁷²

"b/c" By FY 1969 it was becoming apparent that the THOR boosters of the type used by both Program 437 and COLLEGE LAUNCHER were a dwindling resource. In January 1969 it was determined that, aside from the boosters already allocated to these two programs, only six remained. It was decided at that time that four of these would be provided for Program 437, two for Burner II use. According to current plans, such allocation would support both programs through CY 1972. Then, it would become necessary to begin using a "long tank" version of the THOR for both purposes. ADC began drafting plans for the change. Also, ADC began considering a proposal to provide emergency Program 437 capability at Vandenberg in the event of a catastrophe at Johnston Island.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

This proposal had not been approved by USAF at the end of FY 1969, however.⁷³

Beyond Program 437 lay an advanced direct-ascent anti-satellite weapon known as Program 922. This was a new approach to the problem, but the details were hidden behind Special Access classification. Regardless of the details, Program 922 itself became a dead letter. Ling-Temco-Vought was chosen as development contractor in June 1967 and a subsequent Proposed System Package Plan (PSPP) called for test launches from Johnston Island in Fiscal Years 1969 and 1970. Twenty million dollars was allocated for Program 922 development in FY 1968, but test programs quickly died of financial starvation. In December 1967 half of this amount was diverted for use in Southeast Asia. Somewhat later OSD cancelled the entire program and recommended that the technology involved, plus the remaining funds, be diverted to the Army's SENTINEL (later SAFEGUARD) Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) program.⁷⁴

"b1"

" b1 "

 Because of USAF inaction as regards
ROC 2-67 (lack of money and doubts about the state of the
art of space operations were given informally as the reasons
for the USAF failure to act), ADC began drafting a new ROC
on this subject in July 1968. This effort resulted in a
new statement of the requirement, ADC ROC 18-68, "Anti-
Satellite Weapon System", submitted to USAF on 24 September
1968. This requirement was couched in the most general
terms--"the capability to detect, perform mission assess-
ment, and nullify hostile space vehicles in sufficient
time to prevent or limit damage to the areas to be defended"--
in order not to appear to dictate the method of solution of
the problem. ⁷⁷

UNCLASSIFIED

459

But again there was no great enthusiasm for this proposal at USAF. When ADC, in December 1968, inquired as to the status of ROC 18-68, the USAF reply was that action could be expected within two weeks. This did not happen, however, and it was not until April of 1969 that ADC was informed that \$500,000 "might be available" from FY 1970 funds [_____ "61" _____]. ADC was also informed that such a study would be given third priority behind general studies of Missile/Space Defense (MSD) and a study of mid-course surveillance of the trajectory of hostile ballistic missiles. No further word on this matter had been received by the end of FY 1969.⁷⁸